

805 lating the time of day; when I questioned them as to the hour, they were often as much as an hour off, usually behind.

Most activities are ordered with reference to the Gregorian calendar, but the twenty-day Maya calendrical month, defined as "twenty days or a month" is used in much the same way that we use "a fortnight." The Indians consider the moon to be an uncertain indicator of time, since "she does not walk well." But the moon is important in the culture: people note its different phases and are especially aware of the phase under which a child is born—an important sign for the newborn's future. If a baby is [856] born at the full moon, he is expected to mature more readily. The full moon also signifies a propitious time for undertaking certain activities, [1187] such as cutting wood for the main posts of a house and cutting palm for the roof.

THE DAILY SCHEDULE

512 Daily activities are organized by traditional economic pursuits. The woman is the first one to rise in the morning. She gets up at dawn, lights 462 the fire, and sets a jar of water to boil for coffee. She grinds the nixtamal [252] cooked the night before on the stone grinding board, or takes it to the mill in the center. She then makes tortillas either by hand or with a press; a recent innovation made of two hinged pieces of wood in which the ball of [412] dough is set between pieces of plastic paper. [1177] [1178]

[264] The men of the household are served first, followed by the boys; the women and girls eat last. As soon as they have eaten, the men and boys who have finished the required three years of schooling go out to the fields to work. They walk single file even in the streets of the town, the father preceding his sons. Each carries a machete, net bag, tumpline, and sheepskin back-protector if he plans to carry any loads. Many bring shotguns as well in order to hunt for field rats, raccoon, or the burrowing animals they find in the fields.

After the men leave, the women go to the porch and "seize their work." [857] The children go to school, which begins at eight-thirty in the morning [872] and continues until five o'clock in the evening. They return home for [264] lunch, a meal of tortillas, coffee, and sometimes beans or chayote when it is in season.